



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Finance and Resources Committee

CLOSURE OF THE ‘AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT’ FROM THE 2019 HMICFRS INSPECTION

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 02 July 2021

Purpose of Report:

To present Members with an update on the Service’s response to the outcomes regarding the 2019 inspection of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services and present closure of the associated ‘Areas for Improvement’ that were identified.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Members:

- Agree the closure of ‘Area for Improvement 15’.
- Approve the reporting of the two ‘Areas for Improvement’ aligned to the Finance and Resources Committee as discharged.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Fire Authority in July 2019, Members were presented the report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following the recent inspection of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS).
- 1.2 In September 2019, Members were presented with an action plan detailing the 25 'Areas for Improvement' (AFIs) that had been highlighted by HMICFRS and capturing the actions to address these areas.
- 1.3 It was agreed that scrutiny and monitoring of progress of these actions would be facilitated through the Fire Authority Committee structure, with regular progress reports being presented to Members.
- 1.4 Of the 25 AFIs, two were aligned to the Finance and Resources Committee for scrutiny.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Each of the 25 areas for improvement were allocated to a lead officer with clear milestones and expected outcomes. Within the Service, progress against these timelines was monitored and reported through the monthly Performance and Programme Board, chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.
- 2.2 Over the past 24 months, work has been undertaken to develop the Service in the areas highlighted by HMICFRS. Much of the work that was developed had already been started by the Service or was planned as part of the 2019/20 Business Plans. The Service has continued to focus resources and support to ensure continual improvement of these areas as part of the Service's wider Strategic Plan.
- 2.3 As a summary closure report, the areas for improvement, highlighted for scrutiny by the Finance and Resources Committee, that has been previously 'closed' is captured in the table below, with a short description of the closure statement:

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT	CLOSURE STATEMENT
<p>AFI 16 – The Service should ensure it has sufficiently robust plans in place which fully consider the medium-term financial challenges beyond 2020 so it can prepare to secure the right level of savings.</p>	<p>The Medium Term Financial Strategy, Reserve Strategy and Capital Strategy were all approved by Fire Authority on 20 December 2019.</p> <p>The Fire Authority approved a 1.95% increase in Council Tax when enabled a balanced budget to be set for 2020/21. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the Authority will be able to set balanced budgets in the years 2021/22 to 2023/24. The Budget Proposals report, Prudential Code, Treasury Management Strategy and Transformation and Efficiency Strategies were approved by Fire Authority on 28 February 2020.</p> <p>The Authority has set a balanced budget for 2020/21 and expects this to continue into 2021/22 and beyond. Future year's planning will continue as the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review becomes known.</p> <p>The £1.4m Transformation and Collaboration Earmarked Reserve is being used to support the workstreams within the 'Transformation and Efficiency Strategy'.</p> <p>Monitoring of 2020/21 expenditure against budgets, along with monitoring of reserve use will be undertaken by Finance and Resources Committee, and any corrective action will be taken where necessary.</p>

2.4 Further to the above 'closed' area of improvement, AFI 15 is presented to Members at this meeting with the recommendation to close this action:

AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT	CLOSURE STATEMENT
<p>AFI 15 – The Service needs to accelerate its plans to improve ICT so that it makes best use of available technology to support operational effectiveness and efficiency.</p>	<p>The four actions associated with this area for improvement have now been completed.</p> <p>This includes the roll out of Microsoft Surface Go devices to stations and appliances, the migration of PowerBi software to Microsoft Azure (cloud based software), the development of an online training portal and ICT training framework for NFRS staff, and the integration of the learning and competency system.</p>

- 2.5 To align to Fire Authority governance, it is proposed that Members of the Finance and Resources Committee review the AFIs presented in this report and agree closure of all actions. It is proposed that this is reported to the full Fire Authority and that scrutiny of the AFIs for this Committee is discharged.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because the information contained in this report does not relate to a change in policy or procedure.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 places a duty on NFRS in respect of the delivery of its services to communities.

- 7.2 The Local Government Act 1999 places a statutory duty on NFRS to '*secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised*'. The reporting of Service Delivery's performance ensures that the Service is focusing on key objectives as set by the Fire Authority and continuous improvement. This ensures that Members can apply effective scrutiny to be satisfied that statutory obligations are being met.
- 7.3 The Police and Crime Act (2017) Chapter 4 Section 11, outlines that the English inspectors must inspect, and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of, fire and rescue authorities in England.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Agree the closure of 'Area for Improvement 15'
- 10.2 Approve the reporting of the two 'Areas for Improvement' aligned to the Finance and Resources Committee as discharged.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER